

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 IO-14 OMB-01 ACDA-19 SR-02 ORM-03

AID-20 DRC-01 /153 W

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R 140903Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1054

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

CINCPAC

CINCPACREPPHIL

13TH AF

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 1733

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, RP

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGES FIGHTING IN JOLO TOWN

REF: MANILA 1682

1. INFORMATION SECRETARY TATAD BRIEFED LOCAL PRESS ON FIGHTING IN JOLO TOWN FEB 13, CHARACTERIZING IT AS RESULT OF ATTACK BY "200 TO 400 MAOIST REBELS." TATAD SAID THAT SURPRISE ATTACK LASTED TWO DAYS, THAT REBELS MANAGED TO OCCUPY SOME BUILDINGS INCLUDING NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY AND PORT AREA AND THAT RETREATING REBELS HAD SET FIRE TO TOWN ULTIMATELY AFFECTING ONE HALF TO TWO THIRDS OF IT. TATAD ASSERTED THAT NO MILITARY BOMBARDMENT HAD OCCURRED, THAT HELICOPTERS HAD BEEN USED MERELY AS MILITARY TRANSPORTATION, AND THAT ENTIRE TOWN IS NOW UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL.

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2. TATAD BRIEFING ECHOS BRIEFING GIVEN BY DEFENSE SECRETARY

PONCE ENRILE FEB 12 ON JOLO FIGHTING. DURING PONCE ENRILE'S BRIEFING, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME GOVERNMENT CASUALTIES, THAT THERE WERE ABOUT 30,000 REFUGEES IN SULU AS A RESULT OF THE FIGHTING AND THAT JOLO WAS NOW CLEARED OF REBELS. ENRILE NOTED HE WAS HEAD OF THE COUNTRY'S RELIEF OPERATION AND HAD DIRECTED THAT RELIEF BE SENT TO JOLO. RESPONDING TO A QUESTION, ENRILE SAID, SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUSLY, "WE ARE STILL ENTERTAINING AN 'OPEN ARMS' POLICY. IF THEY (THE REBELS) WANT TO SURRENDER, THEY SURRENDER...NO CONDITIONS." PRESIDENT MARCOS REPLYING TO SIMILAR QUERY IN HIS FEB 12 INTERVIEW WITH NEWSMEN ACCOMPANYING THE WHITLAM PARTY, SAID, "...I RESTATE MY POLICY THAT WE ARE OFFERING AMNESTY TO THOSE WHO SURRENDER AND COME OUT WITH THEIR GUNS AND SUPPORT THE NEW SOCIETY UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION."

3. EMBASSY LEARNED TODAY THAT GOP PLANS TO MOVE ABOUT 20,000 REFUGEES FROM JOLO TO ZAMBOANGA. IF MOVE IS ACTUALLY CARRIED OUT, ZAMBOANGA WILL HAVE REFUGEE POPULATION (BOTH MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN) OF UPWARDS OF 70,000.

4. COMMENT: WHILE GOP WOULD OBVIOUSLY PREFER TO KEEP FIGHTING IN JOLO AWAY FROM PUBLIC EYE, PARTICULARLY DURING PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S VISIT AND JUST PRIOR TO PRINCE JUAN CARLOS' VISIT FEB 18, THE EXTENT OF THE FIGHTING, THE VERY LARGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND THE REPORTS THAT HAVE ALREADY APPEARED IN SUCH PUBLICATIONS AS STARS AND STRIPES, CLEARLY FORCED GOVERNMENT HAND. CHARACTERIZATION OF PERPETRATORS AS SMALL NUMBER OF MAOIST REBELS OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED TO DOWN PLAY IMPORTANCE OF FIGHTING BUT THIS CHARACTERIZATION WILL UNDOUBTEDLY NOT MISLEAD PHILIPPINE PUBLIC AS TO SERIOUSNESS OF FIGHTING. MAJOR QUESTION REMAINS WHAT GOVERNMENT POLICY WILL BE TOWARDS MUSLIMS THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH; MARCOS' AND ENRILE'S COMMENT ON SURRENDER CONDITIONS INDICATES SOME WAFFLING ON AMNESTY ISSUE IN PRESENT EMBATTLED MOOD.
SULLIVAN

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